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A NOTE ON MALACHI 2:15a

BY JOHN MERLIN POWIS SMITH
The University of Chicago

In *HAL* this verse runs as follows:

וְלֹא־אֶחָד עָשָׂה וְשָׂאֵר רוּחַ לֹו וְיִמָּה הָאֶחָד מִבְּקֶשׁ יְרֵעַ אֱלֹהִים

This is by general consent the most obscure verse in the book of Malachi. The wide variety of interpretations testifies eloquently to its difficulties. The chief elements of uncertainty and obscurity in this text are the following: Is it a question or a declaration? Is **אֶחָד** the subject or the object of **עָשָׂה**? If it be the object, what does it mean and what then serves as subject of **עָשָׂה**? If it be the subject, what takes its place as object of **עָשָׂה**? To whom does the pronoun in **לֹו** refer? What does **שָׂאֵר רוּחַ** mean? If **רוּחַ** denote the Spirit of God conceived of as a person, as the rendering of R.V. seems to suggest, how can it be measured quantitatively by **שָׂאֵר**? Is **הָאֶחָד** the subject of the participial phrase **מִבְּקֶשׁ . . . וְיִמָּה**, or is it the predicate of the interrogative clause **וְיִמָּה הָאֶחָד**? Further, is **וְשָׂאֵר רוּחַ לֹו** a simple relative clause modifying the subject **אֶחָד**, or is it a concessive clause, viz., "although he had a remnant of the spirit," modifying **עָשָׂה אֶחָד**? The margin of R.V. offers as good a rendering as any that has been offered, viz., "And not one hath done so who had a residue of the spirit. Or what? Is there one that seeketh a godly seed?" This carries on the thought of the preceding context without interruption, but it lacks inner coherence. The latter half of it is too broken and abrupt. Furthermore, there is nothing to warrant "so"; "spirit" is wholly undefined; and "residue of the spirit" is wholly without analogy.

Professor B. Duhm¹ modifies slightly the rendering of R.V. margin by emending **עָשָׂה וְשָׂאֵר** to **עָשָׂהוּ שָׂאֵר** and translating, "Nicht Einer hat es gethan, der noch einen Rest von Gesinnung hatte! Was ist mit 'dem Einem'? Es ist der, der Gottessamen sucht." This is open to certain of the objections that hold against R.V.

¹ *Die Zwölf Propheten* (1910) and *Anmerkungen zu den Zwölf Propheten* (1911).

margin and in addition to the criticism that it is forcing language to take the **אָהֶד** out of **לֹא אָהֶד** and erect it to a position of prominence as the subject of a new sentence—a difficulty that Duhm himself feels. Furthermore, **מִבְּקֶשׁ** is in need of a subject, if its subject is to receive so much emphasis.

Of the various emendations proposed, that of Wellhausen has met with most favor. This involves only a change of **וְלֹא** to **הֲלֹא**, **וְיִשְׁאָר** to **וְיִשְׁאָר** and of **לָנוּ** to **לָנוּ**. The rendering based upon this is, "Has not the same God given us breath and sustained us? And what does he desire? Seed of God!" This is open, however, to serious objection. **עֲשֵׂה רוּחַ** is an extraordinary idiom. **וְיִשְׁאָר רוּחַ** could only mean "and left (or "kept") spirit (or "breath") over"; it could never mean "and has maintained breath" as Wellhausen desires.

Dr. Paul Riessler² offers the most recent reading and translation. Reading the first six words as in **MA**, he continues thus: **וְאַחֲרָיִם מִיָּדֶיךָ מִבְּקֶשׁ אֱלֹהִים**. His translation runs, "Auch der Eine handelte nicht so, obwohl Nachkommenschaft sein Begehr war. Und ihr saget: Was anders, als Nachkommen verlangt der Herr?" Aside from the violence done to the text by the readings **וְאַחֲרָיִם** and **מִיָּדֶיךָ**, the translation cannot stand. "So" is imported into the text. **שֶׁאֵר** never has the meaning "posterity," not even in Isa. 14:22, where the nearest approach to it is made. Nor is **רוּחַ** ever used in the sense of "desire." Furthermore, the rendering given **אַחֲרֵי** is without analogy.

Θ affords no help. According to the Vatican Codex, it runs, *καὶ οὐ καλὸν ἐποίησεν καὶ ὑπόκριμα πνεύματος αὐτοῦ; καὶ εἶπατε τί ἄλλο ἢ σπέρμα ζητεῖ ὁ θεός;* The first words are doubtless to be corrected to *καὶ οὐκ ἄλλος*, with Syro-Hexaplar, Old Latin, Bohairic edition of the Coptic, Arabic, Ethiopic, and Armenian; cf. *συκαλλος* of **GAQR**, Heidelberg Papyrus, and Holmes and Parsons 22, 26, 36, 42, 49, 51, 62, 91, 95, 97, 130, 147, 185, 228, 233, 240, which is probably to be divided in the same way.

§ presents an interesting variation or two:



בְּכֶמֶל לֹא אִמָּן סָבַח סִמְעוֹן בְּיִסְטָא בְּכִתְיָה סָבַח עֲלֵי הָאֵלָּה מִן הָאֵלָּה.

² *Die kleinen Propheten oder das Zwölfprophetenbuch nach dem Urtext übersetzt und erklärt* (1911).

§ seems to have been made from a text which either did not contain עשה or else read it as אִישׁ (in the order אִישׁ אָחֵד, of course). It also lacked וְנִמָּה.

Following the lead of § we may restore the text as follows:

וְלֹא אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר רוּחַ לוֹ אָחֵד מִבְּקֶשׁ זֶרַע אֱלֹהִים

This adopts אִישׁ for עשה with § and drops אָחֵד as a dittograph of the following 'א. It also agrees with § in dropping וְנִמָּה, regarding it as a marginal query which has gotten into the text. The ה of הָאָחֵד goes with וְנִמָּה as a dittograph. שֶׁאֵר gives way to אֲשֶׁר, the letters having been transposed here exactly as in Micah 3:3, where  presents כְּאֲשֶׁר, while  reads כְּשֶׁאֵר, which is much the better text.

The emended text may be rendered, "There is not a man who has moral sense—one who seeks a godly seed." Cf. Jer. 5:1. This furnishes excellent connection with the preceding context in which the writer has been denouncing the prevalent evil of divorce from Jewish wives, apparently followed by remarriage with non-Jewish women. It also furnishes a smooth inner connection, the latter part of the question being a definition of the former part. For the meaning "moral sense," compare the use of רוּחַ in the following clause and also in such connections as Jer. 51:1; Hag. 1:14; I Kings 21:5, and Ps. 51:12.